California State Archives
State Government Oral History Program

Oral History Interview

with

Hon. Rebecca Morgan

California State Senate, 1984-1993

November 5, 2021
Los Altos, California

By Natalie M. Fousekis
Lawrence de Graaf Center for Oral and Public History
California State University, Fullerton

LEGISLATIVE AND POLITICAL REFORM IN CALIFORNIA

Rebecca “Becky” Morgan

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Biographical Summary

Rebecca "Becky" Morgan (b. 1938) represented the 11th District of California in the State Senate from 1984 until 1993. Prior to the senate, Morgan served her local Parent Teachers Association, the Palo Alto School Board, and the Santa Clara Board of Supervisors.

Morgan was born in New Hampshire and raised in Woodstock, Vermont. Her family transitioned to Palo Alto, California, in 1967. She holds a bachelor's degree from Cornell University and an MBA from Stanford University.

While serving in the State Senate, Morgan advocated for children and education, particularly class size reduction. She chaired the Senate Select Committee on Child Care and Development, and served several additional committees, including Education, Budget and Fiscal Review, Transportation, Energy and Public Utilities, Toxics, and Revenue and Taxation. Despite Morgan's numerous political achievements, she faced both support and scrutiny as the first woman to wear pants on the senate floor—an act that, unbeknownst to her, would successfully end the longstanding, gendered dress code.

Morgan left public office for the nonprofit sector, where she worked regionally to assist and improve education on behalf of Joint Venture: Silicon Valley Network. She created the California Economic Summit, a bipartisan network of business, equity, environmental, and civic organizations that meet annually to discuss and solve issues facing California. Additionally, with her family she formed the Morgan Family Foundation, which focuses to improve areas of education, youth, environment, and conservation.

She currently resides in Los Altos, California

DE GRAAF CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

NARRATOR: REBECCA MORGAN

INTERVIEWER: Natalie M. Fousekis

DATE: November 5, 2021

LOCATION: Los Altos, California

PROJECT: California State Archives State Government Project

NF: This is an an interview with Becky Morgan for the California State Archives State Government Oral History Program. We are in the offices of the Morgan Family Foundation in Los Altos, California. It is November 5, 2021. The interview is being conducted by Natalie M. Fousekis. Becky, thank you so much for sitting down with me this morning.

BM: You're welcome.

NF: So let's start at the beginning, when were you born?

BM: I was born December 4, 1938, so I'll be having my eighty-third birthday soon.

NF: Yes. And where were you born?

BM: I was born in Hanover, New Hampshire, but I grew up in Woodstock, Vermont. There was no hospital in this little town of 1,200 people.

NF: Where were your parents from?

BM: My parents were early Puritans, if you will. I've only gone back four generations, I hope to do more one of these days. My father, Quinn, was Irish, and my mother was English.

NF: What was her name?

BM: Rachel Lewis Quinn. My father was Forest Arthur Quinn. They met on my grandparents farm, where my mother lived and my father came to work.

NF: Tell me about your parents' farming life.

BM: It's hard work. Farming is *very* hard work, 365 days a year. My parents took one vacation in my memory, and that was to go to Chicago for a Farm Bureau conference because they were, of course, both farmers.

We had dairy cattle. Raised the crops, hay mostly, bought the grain. And then my experience as the kid on the farm, and the oldest of three children—I have two younger brothers—was to help with the haying in the summertime, feed the calves, and occasionally even do the milking—with a machine, not by hand. (laughs)

NF: Can you talk a little bit more about your memories of childhood and family life growing up on that farm?

BM: I guess the memory I have is you get your work done before you are allowed to play. So whether it was working in the barn or regularly cleaning the house on Saturdays so I could go out and ride my horse, I think that work ethic stuck with me throughout my life. I am hoping one of these days I'll learn how to play a little more. (both laugh)

NF: Maybe in this next year?

BM: Maybe in the next decade or so, right?

NF: Can you talk a little bit about your mother and father and sort of how you were raised?

BM: Where I grew up, both because of the family and the size of the town and all, it was an isolated life. I rode a bus four miles into the village for school. It was an elementary school with a gymnasium in-between, and then a middle school and high school in an attached building. And I remember as a kid being sent up to the high school to deliver a message, thinking, How huge that building was. But that was my schooling.

There was not kindergarten in my day. It was first grade through high school in the local school. My parents and their families were pretty stoic and pretty hardworking, not too communicative, although my dad did get on the board of supervisors after he had been on the board of education. So he liked talking to people. He used to say he went "down street." Went downtown, "down street," to his meetings. And he enjoyed people. My mother was much more reserved.

NF: What kinds of things would you and your siblings do for fun once you had finished your work on the farm?

BM: My fun was riding my horse. And in the wintertime I did get to ski. Although I didn't ski until after basketball season because I *did* play basketball all four years of high school, *way back* when it was two bounces for a woman, (laughs) or a girl, and you had half a court. And now I still go to Stanford women's basketball games. The power and the speed has gotten remarkable considering what I grew up with. But I really do believe sports for women are important, and we can talk more about that later, maybe.

NF: Yes, I hope so. What do you remember about your high school years, beyond basketball?

BM: In high school, I ran for school council. I think it was part of the progression that I feel is important for elected people. I am not sure I ever analyzed just *why*, but asking for votes and trying to be part of a council, both in high school and college, that was representing people, just somehow was a natural for me. Perhaps because my father had also been in elected office. Nothing very dramatic came out of our councils, either in high school or in college. You know, what colors is your class going to have? What is the logo going to be? Nothing astounding. (laughs)

NF: Who were your role models growing up?

BM: I think everybody should have a role model. And my role model in high school—well, until she died—was Senator Margaret Chase Smith, the only woman in the U.S. Senate at the time I was a teenager. She was from Maine. Her courage really impressed me. She was the one that challenged Joseph McCarthy, who was labeling people communist at that time. She—even as the only woman—stood up on the floor of Congress and challenged him for his inappropriate behavior of identifying people. So I admired her courage, I admired her legislation. A woman on the Defense Committee was kind of unusual. People may or may not remember that she always had a red rose on her lapel. I didn't mimic that, but I did find her an inspiration.

NF: How did you end up selecting Cornell for college, and in fact, how did you even go towards college to begin with?

BM: Even though neither of my parents had more than two-year college—my mother, a one-year secretarial school, and my father, a two-year agricultural school—they, to their credit, always assumed I would go to college. This was the 1950s and women were beginning to have opportunities. It was just always taken for granted that I would go.

I remember seeing the *Saturday Evening Post*, the magazine, long ago, having an article on Cornell and I kind of saw that as a possibility. Also, I applied to the University of Connecticut. So I support Stanford women's basketball now, not Connecticut women's basketball. (laughs) And I got accepted at both schools but Cornell offered me a small scholarship and that was pretty important to my family. At that time—as anybody watching this may remember, who is in their later years, and you, in your younger years, would be astounded to know—my parents contributed a thousand dollars a year to my education at Cornell. And I worked twenty hours a week as a waitress, and then senior year I also did typing—we didn't have data processing—for a professor, so that I managed to get through college without debt.

NF: That is amazing. Once you got to Cornell, what kinds of subjects interested you? What was life like for a woman at Cornell in that era?

BM: Cornell was special because we were allowed to take classes in the different colleges. There were seven colleges at Cornell University, and while I was in what was called Home Economics, now called Human Ecology, I was a textiles and clothing design major. I took courses in nutrition—which kept my family in good stead, we have been pretty healthy all our lives, with good diets—and interior design, public policy, but I also

had a chance to take literature courses in the arts college. I took accounting in the engineering college. So it was a wonderful experience. I had friends that I see to this day. We have a reunion once a year.

It was also a place where I was on student council. *That* was an interesting experience in the fifties. A woman was not allowed to be president of the class. Top-voting-getting women were vice president—and that was me—and the top-vote-getting man was president. But it was where I met my husband of sixty-two years, now.

[00:10:35]

NF: And how did you meet him?

BM: He was class representative from one of the dorms, and I was vice president, so our councils would meet together. In the fifties, men weren't always nice. Some of them aren't *now*, (laughs) but many are. So the men would kind of challenge what I thought I had to offer the council. My husband, Jim, I remember at least twice would stand up and say, "Now wait a minute. Let's listen to what she has to say." And I thought, Whoa, that's pretty nice support! And then there was, I think, some chemistry there, and we started dating, and married the weekend after I graduated. He had a five-year engineering program, so we went back for that and his Master's.

NF: What made Jim stand out, besides the support, to you?

BM: My husband Jim was an engineering student, and that's hard studies. So he was studying quite a bit but we had time for dates and walking around the lake, things like that. He also was in a fraternity. The year that he was president of the fraternity, they had some bad actors. And he showed real leadership in dealing with the brothers, if you will, in the fraternity. In fact, getting one of them removed. So I started to see early on his leadership capacity and his sense of decency. And I liked his values of being supportive, honest, respectful, trustworthy.

NF: Sounds wonderful. So after you married and Jim finished his degree at Cornell, what was in store for the two of you after that?

BM: Well, we moved eight times in nine years. And so, my career was pretty limited in those early years so I chose that time to raise two children. Jeff was born while my husband was getting his MBA. I was an assistant county 4H agent, having been a 4H member as a kid—

NF: What do you do as a 4H agent?

BM: Well, Jim was getting his MBA. I worked as a county 4H agent, recruiting leaders of these 4H clubs. It started primarily as a rural, agricultural organization, but moved into cities where you could have bicycle programs, electrical programs, or cooking and sewing and things like that. So it was recruiting and teaching, I did that for two years. Then we moved into the Army for two years, and there wasn't too much opportunity for me as a woman at that point. So I had a garden and raised the two children. Jeff was born

in ’62, and my daughter was born in ’64, in the Army. And that was very nice. When you look at the cost of hospitals and birthing today, I think she cost us $2.47 (laughs) and probably some aspirin or something.

NF: That is unimaginable in today’s world.

BM: Oh, absolutely. But that was the U.S. Army.

NF: Do you remember any of the places you moved that you particularly loved or didn’t love as much during those eight, nine years?

BM: Well, after we were married, my husband’s father became ill. So I spent one year in Indiana. I got one month of substitute teaching, otherwise there wasn’t much going on. This was before the children were born. So that was a pretty lonely year while my husband ran the canning factory that was part of the family business. But, again, I was able to have a horse and do some walking and horseback riding. So that was not my favorite year, certainly. And then, getting to Palo Alto in 1967 was a real opportunity, and that’s really when my more-recent elected years started.

NF: So what brought you to Palo Alto in 1967?

BM: My husband worked for Textron which was a multi-business company, and spent two years in the Washington office in the aerospace industry and then two years in Southern California, and then was moved up to Belmont, California, in December of 1968. So what *I* did along the way—with what we used to call “pin money,” with a few dollars here and there—was—today when you see clothes can be any length of skirt or whatever—I was making money lowering or raising women’s hems on their dresses. (laughs) But I also did some actual dressmaking, if you will, so I could pick up a little money while also having contact with adults while raising preschool children.

NF: Where did you move when you came to Palo Alto?

BM: In Palo Alto we were in South Palo Alto. There were three high schools at that time, and I wanted our children to go to school in the most diverse of the three schools. And so we lived in South Palo Alto, on Ames Avenue. That’s where both children—my son started first grade and my daughter started nursery school, in South Palo Alto.

NF: So you were in Palo Alto for a couple of years, how did you get engaged in the community before running for school board?

BM: I chose to work with the PTA, Parent Teachers Association, once my children were in school, just keeping watch of what was happening, having the old-fashioned cake sales to raise a little extra money for the schools. And then, at that point, after a couple years of PTA and having the closure of one of our schools, which I supported because our children had no choice of teachers. It was such a small school that they had no choice. It was one teacher per class. And, with very different offspring, they needed different kinds of teachers, and that wasn’t available. So, with the population of the Palo Alto schools dropping from 16,000 to 8,000, we had to close schools.

So, as PTA president, I thought I kept in pretty good touch with the neighbors, but when it was likely to happen that their school would be closed, and when it happened, there was a lot of anger. Personally, I kept my newsletters that I sent to them, warning them. So I supported the closure of the school because I thought children should have choices. I was more for program than property.

NF: And before you decided to run for school board, had you gotten involved in politics locally?

BM: I had not participated. I walked precincts in 1968, in the rain, I remember that. But I had not otherwise been engaged. I had watched my dad as an elected person, and U.S. Senator Margaret Chase Smith. But that was about it. And then I did the Parent Teacher Association. There was an opening on the Palo Alto School Board. Some of the other PTA presidents came to me and said, "Becky, you should run. You're either courageous or foolish, but probably the former." (laughs) And of course standing up for the school closure, they were grateful because *their* school didn't get closed.

And I had been very fortunate at all three levels of elected office, I was recruited. I didn't have to step forward and fight for the position. I started with a support base. And I did have other PTA presidents support me in 1973. After the PTA, I had a year of running the office for a congressional candidate, who was Congressman Pete McCloskey. I worked for him, learned about walking precincts, and organizing a campaign office, which was very useful.

[00:20:30]

NF: So what do you remember about your first campaign for school board?

BM: In 1973, people were still at home. So I knocked on a lot of doors. We had coffees, morning, afternoon, and evening. I think I spent $1200 and had an eight-an-a-half-by-eleven sheet of brochure, if you will. So it was a lot of just getting to meet people and explaining why I had supported closing schools, what was happening in the school district. Campaigning is—at least it should be—about informing the public, and that's how I've always run to share the issues and what I would do about them.

NF: So what was the makeup of the school board like when you joined in 1973?

BM: The school board was four men and me. And I succeeded the first woman that had been elected, just prior to my term. I always remember feeling like what I had to say was disregarded. And so, knowing one of the board members was an administrator at Hewlett Packard and had five daughters, I invited him to lunch. And after a very nice lunch, I said, "This is how I am feeling. Why are you saying the things that you are about my comments?" He said, "Oh, no, Becky, I think you are a great board member." And I never felt belittled from that day forward. And I guess my message to women is confront one-on-one, don't make a big deal and offend people. Stand up for yourself, be courageous and work it through with the person causing the problem.

NF: Sounds like good advice. So, what were some of the challenges that the school board faced during your—it was a five-year term, right?

BM: It was a five-year term on the Palo Alto School Board at that time. And the biggest challenge was the declining enrollment; it was going down so fast.

NF: What was contributing to the decline?

BM: Palo Alto was near Stanford. It was home with zero population leadership. I remember there was one family in our school region that had six children. Otherwise it was moving from four, to three, to two children [per household] and it was starting to be priced out for many people. So those were the primary reasons population was declining, smaller families and too expensive housing—even though we bought a house for $40,000 with five bedrooms and rented out one room. Times have changed *so* dramatically that it is kind of astounding.

NF: How did you as a school board approach closing schools? Because even if it's the reality, I am sure it wasn't very popular.

BM: Closing the schools—having done it in my own local school—I just felt that was the right thing to do. The superintendent of schools would announce the schools that they would recommend and then my phone would ring off the hook every afternoon. And my children would come home from school with me on the phone, (laughs) because we had no staff. It was just the five board members and whatever time we could make available. I also found that I really liked budgets and looking at how our money was being spent. That led me to apply to Stanford business school.

NF: *While* you were on the school board?

BM: While I was on the school board. As I said, I've only known how to work. (laughs)

NF: So how did you go about thinking you would apply to business school?

BM: I was thinking as I was on the school board, and not employed, that I would *want* to be employed once my children got older. I have a daughter who became a doctor raising two children. *I* could not have done that. I have great admiration for her. I felt that I wanted to raise my children while they were younger and *then* look for opportunities.

I thought of going back into teaching because I had that substitute teaching and then actually teaching as a county 4H agent. But then, I thought, Well, maybe I should try for business? Because I really was starting to enjoy working with the budgets. I also considered law school but I remember one wonderful Saturday in May when I took the LSATs, thinking about law school, and I was not prepared for that kind of philosophy and literature. My background was so much more practical.

So I decided to go for business school and was just very fortunate, again. I met some people at Stanford. They technically aren't supposed to interview you, but I knew one professor there that I had talked with. And he said, "Well, I am not supposed to do

this but let me introduce you to the placement director." And the placement director had a picture on her bookcase that could have been taken from my farmhouse kitchen. It was just ironic. And we hit it off, had a good conversation. She said, "Well, I am not supposed to do this but let me introduce you to the director of admissions." And so, I think *that* director of admissions was looking for a diverse class. And as a person of thirty-five, with a background and Bachelor's of Science in Home Economics, I added some diversity to the class. So I got a call on my birthday, in December of 1975, that I had been accepted, so I started in the fall of 1976, graduated in '78.

NF: And how many women were in the business school at that time?

BM: Our business school class had seventy women out of 310 students, which was up from five in 1973. Just in five years we had gone from five women to seventy women. Thanks very much to the dean at the time, R.J. Miller.

NF: So what did you learn in business school that helped you in your future career in public life?

BM: When I decided to run, then, after school board, after business school, I went to Bank of America to use my MBA. I enjoyed the negotiations for loans at the bank. The bank did a good job, I thought, of requiring even people with an MBA to work themselves up from teller to back office to dealing with loans for motorcycles and boats to housing, and then getting into corporate lending, which is what I wanted to do. And so, the MBA was, of course, crucial for loaning to business people in Silicon Valley. The accounting, the finance were pretty essential to understanding the businesses. I enjoyed that. Most of all I enjoyed the negotiations over how much I was going to charge them for the loans. And then, I was again recruited. At the time I had just had lunch with four women who said, "We hear you did a great job as a school board member. There is an opening on the board of supervisors, and we would like you to run."

NF: And who were these women?

BM: These were local women. Ironically enough, all Democrats, and I was still at that time a registered Republican. Those were the days when there was more openness, less partisanship. And they were a part of NOW, the National Organization for Women. I had had lunch with them, came back to the bank, and had a call that my dad had died. It was like I knew that I would say "yes" to them, and follow in my dad's footsteps as a locally elected person.

NF: That is wonderful. I mean, *sad*, but maybe it was some kind of—

BM: So that was what I did: organized, then, to run for county supervisor.

NF: Before we move on to supervisor, when you were on the school board, that was right after Title IX had passed, right?

[00:30:05]

BM: Yes. I was elected in ’73, served until ’78. Title IX of course passed in 1972, fifty years here coming up. And the main impact in our school district was to find the sports space for women. Men weren’t particularly happy that they had to give up their gym for the number of hours that they had it in the past. Of course a group of women weren’t playing football at that point, (laughs) as some of them are trying to do today. But the main impact was on the sports and finding equal space and equal offerings, as far as the number of sport opportunities.

NF: That is such a transformative piece of law.

BM: Sure, and it’s just wonderful that it happened. I belong now to—or have been on the board of the Women’s Sports Foundation that was started by Billie Jean King, and working so hard to continuing to provide opportunities for young women.

NF: Wonderful. So, when you were approached by these women to run for the board of supervisors, what was campaigning like? Because that was a little bit bigger than the school board campaign.

BM: The campaign for county supervisor was by district in Santa Clara County. So I had, essentially, five cities: Palo Alto, Mountain View, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills and parts of Cupertino. So this time, I did need help. I had all volunteers previously, but I did pay an office manager to keep things organized. But I had volunteers that helped walk precincts for me. I had coffees, still; people were still doing coffees. People were still home and weren’t annoyed that you knocked on their door. And if they weren’t home I’d leave a brochure saying “sorry to miss you.”

I was running, at that point, against three other people. One was the mayor of Cupertino, Jim Jackson, and then a young man who was twenty-three at the time and I am friends with him to this day. He worked his way through high school, community college, college, up to the point that he became assistant secretary under the Deputy Secretary of Education in Washington, in the Obama administration. As he said to me, “You gave me a ride to the meetings, you were so nice to me.” I just found him very smart and very creative, with new ideas. And I like to support young people and I like to support people with good ideas, so that was fun. I was not employed at the time, so I did have more time than my opponents and the mayor of Cupertino. So that was important, that I was out there with people.

And to everybody’s surprise I did come in first, but not by 50 percent, so we had a runoff. What was very interesting was the *Mercury News*, our local newspaper, who endorsed my opponent in the primary, saw that I had gotten more votes, and endorsed me in the general. That did not happen in the primary of the school board because it was a fairly weak opponent. In all three areas of my elected office—school board, county board of supervisors, and state senate—my vote total went down, down, down. I think I got 70 percent as a school board member; I think I was in the sixties for county supervisor; and I was in the fifties for state senate.

NF: Bigger areas got more competitive, right?

BM: Right. So there were four of us for county supervisor. Again, it was a lot of walking precincts and going to events. Part of being elected is just showing up. I found that I was in places where my opponents did not show, and it gave me opportunity—and I heard the same thing from walking precincts—to see that people liked a show of energy and a show that you cared enough to really put time and energy into the job. And that's what I had done.

NF: So what was the board of supervisors like when you joined?

BM: The board of supervisors in 1980 had just elected the second and third women. This was 1980, and Janet Gray Hayes had been elected mayor of San Jose, the tenth largest city in America. And it was called the feminist capital of the country, with a mayor in San Jose and three females on the board of supervisors. I was elected at the same time as now-Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren. In our second year we had the chance to hire a new county executive, she was qualified, she was a woman and we hired her from San Jose, Sally Reed.

NF: And were the men on the county board of supervisors less supportive of Sally?

BM: It was often a 3-2 vote on the board of supervisors. Sometimes I could convince the men of the things that I was interested in. There were some 4-1 votes at times. One of the men was quite easy to work with at times, although we voted quite differently. But we were able to agree on transportation issues, so that was helpful. The other male board member was very embedded with the unions. So our interests often spread.

NF: What were some of the other issues that you focused on while you were on the board of supervisors?

BM: As a county supervisor I was interested in children's issues, and started the effort to build a new children's shelter. I learned from parents that if they needed to have their child housed somewhere, they would rather have them with the police department than the social services, which shocked me. And so, I set out to find out what was going on and what was needed. We improved and got new leadership for the foster children and children incarcerated, started the building of a quality facility. So that was significant.

Another project was—looking at the map of my district that I put on my wall, on which there was a dotted line that was put in, in 1956. This was 1981. And there was to be a freeway down the west side of the county; it had never been built. So I took the leadership to form a committee representing the cities through which the freeway would go, and getting support. So that was a major undertaking, meeting the people in the cities, getting the plans together. And in fact, Route 85, in Santa Clara County *did* happen. I got a call to see if I would like to have it named for me. And I said, "That's very nice but I really don't want to wake up in the morning and hear that somebody had died on the Becky Morgan Freeway." (laughs) Now, men don't seem to mind. There are a lot of freeways named after men, but it just didn't sit well with me. What I wanted was to have a school named after me but that hasn't happened. (laughs)

NF: There is still time. So what was it like working on the board of supervisors in the feminist capital of the United States at the time, being around that kind of environment?

BM: This timing was good for me, 1980 to ’84. Because I had other women to work with and a county executive to work with, who met with each supervisor once a week. And so, we did planning. She announced what she was wanting to do and found out who would support and who wouldn’t, and what amendments she could make. So it was a good working situation.

I once sat down and figured, How long am I putting in to this job? which was almost volunteer, although, we were paid some salary. And it was about fifty-five hours a week, to go out and look where they were shooting guns at the quarry—the neighbors were unhappy—figuring out what to do, what to do with the quarry that was sending big trucks down roads, visiting the main jail, the minimum-security jail and the children’s shelters at that time. So I enjoyed it. I enjoyed getting out, meeting with people to see what it was they thought needed to be done.

I enjoyed listening to the testimony at the board meetings. There was someone that regularly came to the board meetings talking about the most vulnerable among us. So it was a good experience for me, even though I grew up quite poor. As I said, I had to work my way through college. But to hear more about the lives of the less-fortunate, that has been important to me, which carried over into the work we have done in our family foundation.

But it was a good four years. I enjoyed the work, the kinds of things I got to work on, the people I got to meet, and I was planning to run for reelection. In fact I had an Oktoberfest to raise money to run for a second term. And I got a call from someone that had supported me for school board and county board of supervisors, who said, “You know there is going to be an open seat for senator, and we’d like you to run.” And I thought, I wanted that someday but not right now. But I did go for an interview. They said, “We’ve looked at about nine people and we now have the person we want. And we really would like you to run.”

[00:42:03]

NF: And what organization was this?

BM: This was at that time, and I am not sure of its existence today, the Lincoln Club, which was a group of moderate Republicans. Tom Ford, who I always called my political godfather, came across the county lines, from San Mateo County into Santa Clara County, to support me for school board and for county supervisor.

NF: And who was Tom Ford?

BM: Tom Ford was a director of real estate at Stanford for many years. Then he was sort of the father of Sand Hill Road, where all the venture capitalists reside. And he didn’t mind at all going door-to-door to the people housed in his buildings to ask for money for candidates.

And of course I had worked for Congressman Pete McCloskey and he was supportive as well. So when I had the interview with the Lincoln Club, I said, "Well, I'll think about it. But I need to know you are going to support me with time and money if I am going to do this and not a second term on the board, which has been my plan." And they said, "Yes, we will," and they did.

And this is where having the Master's in Business really became helpful, both for county supervisor and the state senate elections. Women had a hard time raising money, relative to men. But I think having that degree made it possible for me to appeal both to men, who still gave a $1000, and women, who gave $100, and having constituents believe I really could know the budget, know how to read a budget, think about finance and bonding measures and things like that.

So, by the time I got to the senate, there were only two out of 120 people who had a Master's in Business: John Garamendi and I. And of course he is still in elected office back in Washington D.C. as a congressional member of the East Bay. But that degree was very useful to me, even though I was only at the bank for two years.

NF: What kind of a difference do you think it made that you were recruited for all three of these positions?

BM: Being recruited for all three levels of government has just made life so much easier, because I started with a support base. Whether it was the PTA women in the Palo Alto School District, or the women that came to me for county supervisor, who then would tell their friends, and had helped on campaigns before so they helped me organize and get to the meetings where I could meet the right people to spread the word that I was a good candidate. And then for the senate, of course, having the Lincoln Club behind me, raising money, was so helpful.

NF: Who was your opponent in the senate race?

BM: I am the answer to a quiz in the former *California Journal*, and that was, "what senator defeated three former senators?" In 1984, after being recruited and being promised money and support to run for the senate, in the primary I was up against two former Republican senators, Marz Garcia and Dan O'Keefe, who had been wiped out of an office. The 1980 census caused two districts to be merged and left without representation for two years. That doesn't happen often, but in 1982 it did. So these two men had served in the late seventies and early eighties, and in 1984 they chose to run again. I think I had one other opponent, too. There were four of us in that race.

And again, I think the Master's in Business helped. I think I had some ideas on things I wanted to do, improving education and transportation, built on what I had learned in my previous two roles. And then, with my good farm background, I think I out-worked everybody. Both at the county level and the senate level. I have what I call flash points in campaigning, when something happens that I think *I think I am going to make it*. I remember when I was running for the senate, going to an event with 200 people and none of my opponents showed up. And I thought, Okay, there's a chance here.

And then, I learned when you are in a debate, which is really a Q&A, as we know, you always try to get the last straw, the straw that gives you a chance to speak at the end. And I had another flashpoint when I was running for the senate in which my opponent, who had been a senator in the eighties, Marz Garcia—no, that was in the primary. Arlen Gregorio had also been a senator. So in running against him, there was an event more in his territory in San Mateo County, one of the ubiquitous luncheons that politicians go to. And I drew the straw that allowed me to speak last, and was able to summarize, I thought, probably one of my better times. A couple people came up to me and said, "Well, we've always supported Arlen, but we're going to support you this time." And so, it was those flash points that I look to that gave me hope, that, *maybe we're going to make this*.

NF: So you prevailed. What do you recall about your first days in the state senate?

BM: One of the things I'd like to say about the state senate in 1984, it was *not* heavily partisan. After my election, Senator Al Alquist, who was sort of the elder of the state senate at that time, and a staunch Democrat, invited me to lunch. And I'll always remember, after a very nice lunch, I said, "Senator, what's your advice?" He said, "Keep your mouth shut for thirty days." (laughs) I wish more people would listen to that advice. But that was just something that I don't think happens now. So that was very helpful.

At that time, I slowly got to know Assemblyman John Vasconcellos, who was very well-known, served thirty-two years in the legislature, from down here. Those two, from time to time, if I really needed a vote—and they didn't oppose it but they might not have voted *yes* if I hadn't asked—would help support my legislation. Those were different days, but it was good. There were only four women, out of forty, in the state senate.

NF: It was you and—?

[00:50:05]

RM: It was the first female state senator from down in the Central Valley, Rose Vuitch, who was known for being the only woman in the state senate at that time. In those days the president pro tem would stand up on the state floor and say, "Gentlemen of the State Senate," and she would raise her little bell and say, "There is a woman here!" She finally just convinced them to say, "Ladies and Gentlemen of the State Senate." And also to get a restroom, which wasn't there for the first four years of her term. And it was Diane Watson and Marian Bergeson. So there were two Republicans and two Democrats.

It wasn't a place where I really made friends. We were associates. We talked to each other. Once or twice a year, the leader of our caucus, Ken Maddy, would take me to dinner with Willie Brown and just sort of be friendly and social. But the women didn't go out to the bar at night and learn about the behind-the-scenes of what was going on. So I think one of the hard things in the early days of women in elected office was getting access to information and getting access to the behind-the-scenes work, because, at least for me, it was awkward.

So I would meet people in their offices. And what was very helpful to me in the state senate, and which I really encourage young women to do, is to do sports. I played tennis, so I got to know Gary Hart, who was chair of the Education Committee, for which I was vice chair. And so we had some good working relationships.

I always remember there was a piece of legislation for which somebody wanted to have another report. And they said, "Well it's only $25,000." And I said in committee, "It's only $25,000, but that is half the salary of a teacher. And we don't need another report." And Gary, as a staunch Democrat, sort of shook his head and he voted "no," also. And so, we worked together.

They used to have ski races; I was a pretty good skier. In a ski with Assemblymember Tom Hayden, among others, I may have been the first person he ever told, as we drove back from the ski slopes, that he was divorcing Jane Fonda. (laughs) And then when I had a piece of higher education legislation, he was chair of that committee, I needed of course the votes. And I got to know him skiing, so I went to his office and explained why I wanted to pass this piece of legislation that would set up a council for these fly-by-night colleges. And he said, "Well, I wouldn't have introduced it—it's not my thing—but if you want it, you can have it." The vote, that is. So the tennis and the skiing really helped me as a legislator, just working with people and being collaborative, which seems to have disappeared.

NF: Did you form relationships with any of the other women senators?

BM: It was very strange that the three—one was Southern California and two were Central California, so, different constituencies. I invited the other Republican women to lunch several times. It wasn't reciprocated. Of the other two women, one I could talk with. In fact, State Senator Diane Watson [from Los Angeles] came over to me the first day in the senate where we had this binder of bills. And she said, "Has anybody told you what's going on here?" And I said, "No." Because with Marian Bergeson coming from the assembly, she knew the process. I was the only other new senator, so nobody gave me an orientation. And, God love her, Diane Watson told me this, and this, and this, which sort of helped orient me right there on the spot. And so we were always friendly, but not social.

NF: I know the Women's Caucus started while you were there. Do you remember much about its founding?

BM: The Women's Caucus was founded by people in the assembly, but I joined as soon as they announced they wanted to have a caucus. The caucus really didn't become effective in getting behind bills, per se, but it allowed women to get to know each other and probably be more supportive than we would've been without these biannual dinners together. So we'd know each other and go to each other's offices and ask for votes, and those kinds of things were helpful.

Then, my memory of the Women's Caucus, other than meeting and socializing and getting to know the women, was when I was recruited out of the senate to come back

to Silicon Valley to run a nonprofit. Both the Democrat and Republican women had a reception for me, and gave me a little statue of the capitol, which was very nice. And then one of the Democrats spoke up and said, "I want to grow up and be like Becky Morgan and double my salary." (laughs) I think we were making $75,000, plus per diem at the time. And Joint Venture Silicone Valley, chose to pay me $150,000. So that was just what I remember from the farewell. (laughs)

NF: What was it like being a moderate Republican in a party that—at least in terms of fundraising and some of its priorities—was much more dominated by conservative Republicans at the time?

BM: In my elected years, from 1973 to 1993, the Republican Party was reasonable. I grew up a Republican because in Vermont we had never had a Democratic governor. I didn't know any better, and my parents were Republican. I had Republican Senator Margaret Chase Smith in the U.S. Senate, and I watched Governor Nelson Rockefeller next door in New York. Then I got to California and was supported by Congressman Pete McCloskey and Congressman Ed Zschau, and they were all reasonable, thoughtful people, and worked across the aisles with other people. That was my image of Republicanism and that was the moderate Republican that I chose to be, fiscally responsible and socially moderate—some would say liberal. It was a time when that was okay.

There were really only two members of the Republican Caucus who were the kind of Republicans that you might see today. It just wasn't the kind of vitriol, nastiness, that we are seeing in the 2020s. It is why I went Independent about twelve years ago, when this started to happen. And I am very sad about what has happened to the Republican Party because I do believe that a two-party system in important, that the give-and-take negotiations and so on creates better legislation. Hopefully we will get back there in my lifetime. I am a little pessimistic, but try to stay hopeful.

NF: Well, and in the world we live in today, the kind of relationship you had with John Vasconcellos and—

BM: —Al Alquist. The days of a moderate Republican like myself being friends with staunch Democrats like John Vasconcellos and Al Alquist just doesn't seem to be happening.

NF: So, when you were in the state senate, what were some of the priorities for you, and what do you feel were your greatest accomplishments?

BM: When I ran for the senate, I assumed I would focus mostly on education. My mantra, if you will, was to get California back to the top ten in educational success, funding and results. At that time we were about halfway in the fifty states. And of course we have gone down to forty-eighth and forty-ninth, which is just tragic. I could never—despite being vice-chair of the Education Committee, it just started going downhill, as far as I was concerned, as far as curriculum and support for quality teachers. So, that was a disappointment as to what has happened to education in California, beginning in the eighties. I made some small tweaks. I set up the Select Committee on Childcare and Development—

[01:00:25]

NF: How did you go about doing that?

BM: I think that children aren't on the top of the agenda for men, or weren't at that time, in the eighties. So I just talked with a few of the women—again, where the caucus came in handy—on the women's caucus, like Sunny Mojonnier, who I am still working with a bit on the Women's History Museum. Five of us got together. And what stimulated me was that I had constituents talk to me who were working at childcare centers, and said, "The regulators come out from Sacramento and they're more interested in a chip on the toilet seat than they are in the curriculum that we have for the children." And I thought, This is wrong.

This was what's called a select committee. It didn't have power to pass legislation or get funding, but we could hold hearings and get testimony about what was happening in the childcare field. It did, then, allow us to work with staff to try to introduce legislation and work with regulators about what was important. It was beginning, I believe, in about 1986, '87, to get attention on children, because there had not been anything that effected children lower than kindergarten up until that time.

NF: Yeah, despite the efforts of some women along the way. But yes, it is long overdue, still.

BM: It was also a good way to work with five other women who had similar interests. I probably wouldn't have known them as well, or have as good communication in those hearings if it weren't for the caucus.

NF: So who were the other women on the committee?

BM: We had Bev Hansen,[1] Sunny Mojonnier, Jackie Speier who were in the assembly, Marian Bergeson,[2] Delaine Eastin.[3] Not sure, there were only four or five of us. And that was good.

NF: You just prompted me to think about the fact that you—with Delaine and Jackie and Marian—all ended up on that cover of the *California Journal* in 1988. Do you recall that?

BM: I *do* recall that some of us women were on the cover of *California Journal*. I enjoyed that magazine. I am sorry it didn't continue, or wasn't able to continue, mostly for financial reasons. But they always had a ranking of one to forty in the senate, and one to eighty in the assembly, of legislators. We were ranked by intelligence and quality of education and sociability, those kinds of rankings. I think there were five or six criteria. Marian Bergeson and Delaine Eastin and I ranked in the top ten each year, along with—I regret to not remember—one or two others.

NF: I think it was Jackie and Bev Hansen, maybe?

[1] Bev Hansen, OH# 6216, de Graaf Center for Oral and Public History.
[2] Marian Bergeson, OH# 5370, de Graaf Center for Oral and Public History.
[3] Delaine Eastin, OH# 6220, de Graaf Center for Oral and Public History.

BM: I am being prompted. Bev Hansen and Jackie Speier, I think, who tended to be ranked in the top ten. Speaking of Jackie Speier, it was a good time while we had a majority of women on the board of supervisors, it was time when we had legislators up and down the peninsula here that were female. I was in the South Bay, if you will, and then we had Anna Eshoo and Jackie Speier and Nancy Pelosi, all county supervisors. Of course this was the time that Dianne Feinstein became mayor in San Francisco. So it is good to still be able to call up the Congress people—I have only done it twice—and get some help.

NF: Other pieces of legislation that you were proud of from your time in the senate?

BM: As I said, I anticipated really making a difference in education and was disappointed that I really didn't succeed at that to the level that I would've liked to. I set up the Childcare and Development. Got some funding to reduce class size, not by one, which wouldn't make a difference, but by, say, from twenty-seven to twenty. Students would get more attention. And I thought a smaller class would make a difference. And I got feedback from constituents who were teachers that, yes, it did.

But the thing that I am probably best known for was a result of being on the Transportation Commission. At the time Governor Deukmejian didn't want the state to be in rail service and transit. Cal Train runs from San Jose to San Francisco, and it was on contract with Southern Pacific. And I knew if that right away were to be closed down, we would never have transit. At that time there weren't that many riders, maybe 17,000, but I felt that it could grow. What would happen to Route 101 and Route 280 if we put more cars onto those roads? I guess I have always felt I had more courage than self-confidence, but I buckled up my courage and said, "We need this train." I went up against the governor of my own party to save the train. And that is probably the most *tangible* thing I am noted for.

I've had other pieces of legislation. I've saved lands over on the coast. But the saving of Cal Train was a major undertaking because of the governor's opposition. But I had support from other local legislators, and negotiated with Southern Pacific to buy out the system, set up a joint-powers agreement with the three counties—Santa Clara, San Mateo, and San Francisco—to run the train. I had enough votes for it, but one. And I went to Speaker Willie Brown, who most people have heard of, and said, "Mr. Speaker, I need one more vote." "You've got it. You'll have it." We did things like that, I, as a Republican, he, as a Democrat. I think we made some good things happen.

NF: Can you talk about the famous story of you wearing pants? I couldn't do the interview without asking that.

BM: I know. Everybody wants to know about Becky Morgan wearing pants on the senate floor. It was a cold January morning, and I had for Christmas gotten a very nice pantsuit, dark brown pants and a herringbone jacket. I just put it on; I didn't even think about it. I don't know why I didn't, but I didn't. I truly didn't.

Monday afternoon, you're on the floor of the senate—and I think I did get up to speak on a piece of legislation. Went back to my office after the session was over, and

much to my chagrin, it wasn't a man, it was a woman that followed me to my office. She said, "Are you aware you are the first woman to wear pants on the senate floor?" And I said, "Well, actually, I wasn't thinking about that."

But it did make headlines. My mother called me from Vermont and said the radio person of that era, Paul Harvey, was speaking about this woman in California that was wearing pants on the senate floor, and used my name. And I said, "Well, Mother, what do you know about what I've done for *kids*?" (laughs)

But that did stick with me. And that pantsuit is now in the museum in Sacramento dedicated to women in California politics, along with the dress that people wore beginning in the early 1900s when women were first elected.

NF: That is wonderful. That is a story I've heard multiple times and I love it.

BM: I will say, for whoever is watching this, some of the fun part of that were the lobbyists. Female lobbyists were required to wear dresses and high heels, to be a lobbyist. They would come to me and say, "Oh, you saved me from pantyhose and heels." Because they were ruining their feet. It's all cement floors up there at the capitol so their feet were getting ruined. So they were able to change *their* dress.

I was at an event after I left the senate, when two lawyers came up to me and said, "We've been wanting to say this to you for a few years now. But the day you made news by wearing pants on the senate floor, we went to our boss—we read it in the coffee shop in the law office—and said, 'We are *not* wearing pantyhose anymore. We're wearing pants.' (laughs) And we are so grateful!" And I'm thinking, Oh, my gosh, here I was an elected official, dealing with millions of dollars of budgets, trying to help kids and transportation, and now I am known for my pantsuit. Oh, well! (laughs) It's all right.

[01:11:00]

NF: It is a fun story. So, what influenced your decision to *leave* the senate in your third term?

BM: I enjoyed my time as a state senator. Maybe "enjoyed" is not quite the right word. But I got great satisfaction from what I was able to do with my legislation. I was part of the 1986 change in tax policy, after the 1986 revision back in Washington, signed by the Revenue and Tax Committee. I could use my Master's in Business to try to teach them about not passing so many bond measures, that we couldn't pay off. I thought I did some good work in transportation and education.

There is an interesting story about being on the Toxics Committee that I can share. My husband was head of a company on which a toxic site had been found, during my campaign in 1984 for the senate. He identified it immediately, reported it, but it became a big topic in my campaign. I always remember this campaign against me, in which this little girl, who looked like I probably looked as a kid, looking into this glass of water saying, "What is Mrs. Morgan doing to my water?" With bubbles coming up out of the glass. They tried to make it appear as a mom-and-pop company, although, it was on the Stock Exchange and fairly sizeable at that point.

And so, of course I got put on the Toxics Committee. But that was good experience, and I felt I could put some insight into why we were having a toxics problem. Because the environmentalists insisted that the tanks that held all the toxics be put underground, because they were unsightly. They started leaking and they weren't found until they polluted water systems. So, I got to serve on committees where I felt I could make a contribution, on matters I had an interest in.

But in 1992, the then-state superintendent of education, Bill Hoenig, was removed from office because of misuse of federal money. With my interest in education, I went to Governor Wilson and asked for an appointment to take his place, because there was not an election that year. It was an appointment by the governor. I was interested in education, wanted to see if I could win that job as superintendent, and see what I could do to continue working on better education for our students. I was not given the appointment. And that was a stepping stone that I needed if I was to ever run for governor.

So, about that time, in May of '93, I remember, I had a call from a headhunter, search firm, and they said there was this new organization in Silicon Valley called Joint Venture Silicon Valley, and they're trying to bring together business, government and civic sector to see if they can make improvements in the valley, particularly in transportation and education. "And you've been named as a possible candidate." So, since I knew I wasn't going to get the appointment to superintendent of education, I said, "Well, let's talk." And we did. While I had nine valuable interesting years as a state senator, I decided, well, I'll go home and see what I can do locally. I was hired as CEO for Joint Ventures Silicon Valley, and, as one of the assembly members said, doubled my salary.

NF: Before we move on, tell me a little bit about your schedule during those nine years.

BM: Yeah, I'll share a little bit about what life was like as a senator. I would get up and leave home at six-thirty on Monday morning and drive. At that time, it was two hours and ten minutes from my garage to the capitol garage. And so, I'd make that trip on Monday morning. The first year I rented a room until I knew Sacramento a little better. And then the second year I got a condo, which I had for the remaining eight years. And then on Thursday afternoons, after our morning session was over, I would usually drive home, meet with my staff in the district, give speeches, go on parades, meet with constituents to see what kind of legislation, maybe, would solve some problems. And then of course, during budget hearings I wouldn't get home until Friday night and sometimes Saturday, like the very last time we were passing the budget into the night to meet the deadline. And it was also—since I am a skier—close enough to Squaw Valley that about every two to three weeks, my husband would come up on the weekend and we would ski. Outside of ski season, I was always home on the weekends. At that point both of my children were adults and out of the home.

NF: So what was life like as CEO of your new Joint Venture position?

BM: Joint Venture was hard work. No one had ever tried to set up this kind of a regional organization that would bring together business, government, and the civic sector. There was one in Austin, Texas, that I visited and reviewed, but it hadn't happened in California.

But it was an extension of what I had been asked to do in the legislature, which was set up our own governance system. I carried that legislation on behalf of the Bay Area Council. Lost by one vote in my last year in Sacramento because Congressman Thompson didn't want Napa Valley to look like Silicon Valley, and was afraid if we had regional governance there would be that kind of pressure. And so, the idea of thinking regionally, rather than just city by city, appealed to me. Because people don't always live where they work, don't play where they work, or play where their home is. And so the idea of regionalism appealed to me.

So when I had the opportunity to start Joint Venture Silicon Valley as the first CEO, it was about a year-and-a-half in germination. I was presented with fifteen initiatives of what people wanted to get done. And *that* they had scaled down from seventy-two ideas. So I had fifteen initiatives.

I was promised that the bills had all been paid. I found out my first few months that there was $250,000 that was outstanding. And so, I said, "Okay, what do we do now?" We had consultants we hired to help incubate the organization. I did not have staff at that point. Again, I will never deny my good fortune—because I have had a lot of it. I was able to go to Bank of America and get $250,000 from them, was able to get $250,000 from Applied Materials and we never looked back, so to speak.

And then I was able to hire an assistant and hire someone to work on improving the education system in the valley, which was the number one priority of the people. And we would bring in programs and funding for them to do things, whether it was in literature or math or reading, that they didn't seem to have the money in the system to do. So we did the first regulatory streamlining work, where we convinced twenty-seven cities to unify their building codes. Then we used computers for the first time in a submittal of building plans.

Things like that were hard work, because it was a new way of getting people to work together. Most of the time they did, not always. I had one member of the board who had been established before I got there and before I had the chance to add new board members, he quit, because he didn't like something we agreed on. That was unfortunate. Because I like to try to get people to find solutions.

But it was a great experience. I think we had an impact on education. Even though it didn't continue after I left, we had teachers that were better resourced and had new kinds of experiences about finding resources and different ways of teaching. We had unified building codes. We had a small, health program, trying to get people to focus more on good health. I looked at my calendar one day and it was five years, five-plus years, raising about $25-million for the schools, $2-million a year for operating expenses

for staff and program projects for the schools and so on, fundraising all the time, trying to convince people to work together.

I opened my calendar and it happened to fall on my sixtieth birthday and I said, "I don't *need* to work this hard." (both laugh) I think we planted seeds with Joint Venture Silicon Valley, seeds that have now matured, grown into what I started in 2007, called California Stewardship Network. It has become a statewide organization that is integrated into California Forward, which was a policy research kind of organization, set up in the nineties. The California Stewardship Network that I founded in 2007 has now taken this concept of regional efforts, and business, government, civic, multi-sector, statewide. And in 2012, I founded the California Economic Summit to get people from around the state to think about what the state needs to be economically, environmentally and educationally viable. And we are having our *tenth* anniversary reunion in Monterey with—from the 200 in 2012, I think we have as many as a thousand at our annual summits. With now great leadership at California Forward, people are thinking regionally, thinking multi-sector, thinking triple bottom line.

[01:23:35]

NF: *That* is wonderful.

RM: So that is the continuation. I think it is much better if you're going to be in elected office, to start local and work your way up, not try to jump in. I mean, we've had governors like Brown and Newsom who started at community colleges and water districts. Only somebody with name recognition like Schwarzenegger, I think, can plunge right in, and I personally don't think that's the best way to choose a leader. I won't mention the 2016 election. But basically, I think the progression from local elected office to a higher office is important, just as I think working in a region to set a model for stewardship and multi-sector effort, and then take it statewide, is the way to go.

It has been pretty exciting to see what other people have done since I helped get this started. In 2012, when we were having our first summit, I knew who Secretary George Schultz was, who had been a Federal Secretary of Defense, and State, and Treasury. I buckled up my courage and went to him and said, "Would you be our speaker at our first summit?" And he knew who I was, having been a senator. And he said, "Oh, Becky, I'm busy. That's really asking too much." Then we chatted a bit and he said, "O*kaaay*." So our first summit had George Schultz as our kickoff speaker. And he said Tom Friedman, the writer, was coming out to play golf, so "I'll have him come, too." So again, I was just blessed.

We kicked it off with George Schultz and Tom Friedman and it has grown from there. Governor Newsom, the then-lieutenant governor and now-governor, has been to, I believe, eight out of the ten summits, so he understands what we are doing. This budget has $600-million in it for regional work. So I am pretty excited about how that has grown and what we as a foundation have been able to do to support it.

NF: So when did you start the foundation and how did that all come about?

BM: My eighteen years in elected office were truly satisfying, exhausting, at some points lonely. But during that time, my husband had become a very successful CEO in Silicon Valley with a company that was worth lots of money, the stock was worth quite a bit. I had come home from Sacramento, had been the leader of Joint Venture Silicon Valley, and thought, We don't have any interest in boats or airplanes or traveling around the world, particularly. Why don't we use some of our good fortune and our resources to start a family foundation? And we did that in 1993.

(laughs) Again, working two jobs at once, starting a foundation and starting Joint Ventures Silicon Valley, we spent three years planning the foundation. Where do we want to focus? Bringing in our children and their spouses? And it was very helpful to have a counselor, if you will, on how you go about starting a foundation. And what was really important was to focus on four areas: we did education, youth—outside of the education process, like sports and so on—environment and conservation, and then stewardship, which was taking what I had done at Joint Venture Silicon Valley and regional work statewide. I just thought, We can be helpful, we have been blessed, we can be helpful.

And so we set up the foundation working in those four areas, and it was a great way to get to know our children's spouses, at that time, and find out their interests. And choosing that way to do it made it very easy for our part-time staff people to say no, when a request for funding came in, to say, "That is not in the Morgans' mission. We understand the need but it is not in the mission." So, we have been able, over these twenty-seven years, to help about 200 organizations.

NF: Wonderful. You haven't talked as much about your interests in conservation and the environment. Where does that come from?

BM: One of my big disappointments as an elected official with an R behind my name was Democrats didn't think I cared about the environment. Somehow Democrats, during my tenure in elected office, had captured the environmental label—even though it was Lincoln who set aside Yosemite and provided federal funding for Yosemite National Park; it was Nixon who started the Environmental Protection Agency—two Republicans. But Republicans had gotten the reputation for not caring about the environment, which was hard because my husband and I really *do*.

In fact, one of my first pieces of legislation was to respond to the Trust for Public Land, who were trying to save 3,300 acres over on the coast of San Mateo County. We were able to save a farm and save a connecting park piece. I am very proud of that.

And then with our family foundation, we have put resources into saving a property in the northern Sierra, for the public good, to manage it, so we have less damage from the wildfires, and to have resources that are protected because there is not building on those lands. We are up to about 100,000 acres that have been protected from development, and in which underground resources have been enhanced and transit for animals has been opened up. Hikers have been allowed to go in places that have been formerly private that we have been able to buy. And so, it is very exciting to have been

able to start the Northern Sierra Partnership and help the environment and conservation in this way.

We had big dreams. But because of our president's skills in getting people to work together, in finding money and setting manageable, measureable goals, we have just gone *far* beyond our wildest dreams in what we've been able to accomplish.

[01:31:05]

NF: That is so wonderful that you've done all this over the last twenty-seven years. So, we are getting near the end but I wanted to ask you a few questions about women in politics—unless there is anything else you wanted to cover that we haven't got to yet?

BM: I do now, to some degree, for the most part, only support women running for office. Because I think while women are able to raise more funds than they had been able to in my eighteen years, it is still a struggle.

Locally, there is an organization called WIRE, Women Identified Recruited and Elected, W-I-R-E, that a friend of mine started, and is working on helping women into elected office, locally, as I say, a stepping ground if they want to go to higher office, which I think is important. I think it is easier now. I am pleased to see that there are many more women *in* elected office. It is still, I think, under 30 percent, so we have a long way's to go. I am mostly, now, just sending checks. (both laugh)

But, also, one of the reasons I left the Republican Party is because of what they are doing to women's choice. And I like choices in my life, whether to play sports, or ski. I like a choice of what kind of healthcare I and women get, and planning our families as we choose. And so that is another important area of focus for me.

NF: Why do you think women are still not above 30 percent of the elected?

BM: I think women are still struggling to become elected because they don't have the support at the local level. It is still a white man's world, even though whites are under 50 percent of the California population. You have to have the people willing to help you raise money. I am not proud of the fact that I was the first person to raise a million and spend a million dollars on a senate campaign in California, but I did, and I was not in debt when I went into office because I had a *lot* of help. But a lot of women don't have that kind of capacity. They don't live in a region where people have money to give. Or they don't have the background in finance to show people that they really can handle budgets the size of the State of California. I am hoping that we will have more and more women with business degrees, with local experience, dealing with budgets that can prove to those who give money that they are the right candidate.

NF: What advice would you or do you give to young women who want to run for office?

BM: Well, first of all, I ask them who they know? And have they been in any elected office before? Even elected as PTA president. But the couple that I have helped recently have been city council women so they have that first step that I think is so important. And

then, how do you go about fundraising? Sort of the advisory importance of showing up, if you will, get out there with the people. And then, it is the struggle of raising money, still. I think it is easier than it was, but I will always remember when I got that first $1000 check from someone—a woman—when I was running for state senate. As I said, the $1000 checks came from the men, the $100 checks came from the women. I had five women, when I ran for state senate, who had the capacity to give me $1000 each, from their own earnings. But that's been a long time coming. Women haven't been in the workforce to *have* the money to give other women. Hopefully that is changing.

NF: Do you see a difference in how men and women lead?

BM: Do men and women lead differently? Yes, *on average*. (both laugh) I find women listen better. They ask more questions. They focus on what have been called the soft issues, like children, education, social services, which are needed, and which, in the past, have been focused on less by the men in elected office, like childcare and development. Nobody thought about that in Sacramento legislation.

I think women can be tough. I am a little disappointed when women become caustic and nasty. I hope the time will change when that is not the behavior. But I think the issues that we focus on have often been different. And the listening, collaborative nature, *on average*, is different.

NF: Do you consider yourself a feminist?

BM: I *do* consider myself a feminist, which is another reason I left the Republican Party. (laughs) I am out to support women. Whether it is in sports—and that will be what I'll do with our foundation closing, it is one of the areas I will continue to provide personal money for: organizations that support girls and women in sports. And then, I have been pro-choice my whole life, supported by my conservative mother. And, I just think women need support.

NF: What are some recent achievements of women in politics that give you hope that we are maybe moving in the right direction?

BM: I think women in the 2000s have started to focus on some of the harder issues. And I dislike the "soft" and "hard," but that's how it has been described in my lifetime, and shown that they have the capacity to understand transportation, revenues and taxation. That makes them more appealing, I think, to male voters. And *that* is helpful. Understanding finance is important. It has not been a field that women have, in the past, gotten as engaged in. But now, with so many women going into banking and running organizations in which they have to understand the budget, hopefully all of those will help more women have the background that will be regarded by voters.

NF: A couple more questions and then we will be done. As someone who has been in public service, politics, and civically engaged for most of your life, what do you think about the state of American politics today?

BM: So I am being asked what I think about the state of politics in the year 2021, soon to be 2022, with another election coming up? I am nervous. I am appalled by what happened in 2016 and the quality of leader that was selected. I am concerned that the 2020 election produced a very honest, *kind* person, but not as strong as we need in this country.

I am discouraged about the quality of people running for office. It is more people who have gotten a poli sci or a social science or a history degree, who go to work for a legislator and want, then, to become a legislator. They have not had experience writing a paycheck, signing a paycheck, out there managing, organizing workers. Having a few, whether it's four or twenty staff members, is not the same as working in the business world. There are a lot of good experiences that qualify a person to be an elected person, but I don't think we have enough people who understand what life is like for the working person. And people don't think that is of concern to Republicans. It has always been of concern to me.

I am just concerned that we don't have people in 2021—that Liz Cheney and Susan Collins and Adam Kinzinger are the only leaders willing to challenge bad behavior. Where is the courage that we had when John Kennedy wrote *Profiles in Courage*, to be able to vote against your party? We have two parties for a reason. We have different philosophies, maybe even different values, but we should *all* be working on what's good for our city, school, state, county, country. And that attitude seems to be in short supply.

[01:41:55]

NF: Wow.

BM: But if I am going to finish off this monologue-dialogue, if you will, with Natalie sitting here with me, I would end by *encouraging* people to run for office, who have ideas that they would like to put forth. I encourage people to support people who they think are qualified for office, and see if we can turn around the negativism and the extreme partisanship that we are seeing in politics today. That we have people working together, collaborating, expressing their strong opinions, but then working out solutions, those kind of people I will vote for.

NF: Last question about you: what are you most proud of in all of these years? It is a loaded question, a big one, I know.

BM: Yeah, I am being asked what I am most proud of? Well, first, to have been married for sixty-two years to the same man. Second, to have two wonderful children who are in their fifties, doing wonderful work. One is saving parks around the world. And one is working on climate issues after having been a doctor for twenty years.

And then, as far as my own career, I am proud that I always tried to work what was best for the people I was representing, as I understood it. I am proud to have saved the train on the peninsula, where we've gone from 17,000 to 100,000 riders. I am pleased to get attention on education. While it is very controversial, right now, Gary Hart, a Democrat, and I started the charter school movement in California in 1991. I am proud of

what we did there and the children that it helped to get a better education than they might have gotten in their home school, because the teachers were less constrained.

NF: Well, thank you so much. This has been a thrill, and I've really enjoyed hearing you tell your life.

BM: Good. You're welcome. And thank you to Cal State Fullerton for doing this project. I am glad you got funding, too, from the state, for the second round.

END OF INTERVIEW